

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a
2 communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the
3 communications system, the method comprising:

4 connecting from the first client to a communications system host;

5 sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to
6 establish a direct connection to the second client;

7 when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the
8 second client that bypasses the communications system host; and

9 transferring a file over the direct connection.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications
2 system host.

1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the second client accepts the request based on indicated
2 preferences of the second subscriber.

1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is initiated by the second client.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection to the second client is established
2 using an IP address of the second client.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating
2 that a direct connection to the second client is established.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant
2 messaging host.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a data file.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a text file.

1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a video file.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

1 14. A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a
2 communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the
3 communications system, the method comprising:

4 connecting from the second client to a communications system host;
5 receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to
6 establish a direct connection;
7 accepting the request from the first client;
8 establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications
9 system host; and
10 receiving a file over the direct connection.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications
2 system host.

1 16. The method of claim 14, wherein accepting the request is based on indicated preferences
2 of the second subscriber.

1 17. The method of claim 14, further comprising initiating the direct connection.

1 18. The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is established by the first client
2 using an IP address of the second client.

1 19. The method of claim 14, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface
2 indicating that a direct connection to the first client is established.

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1 20. The method of claim 14, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant
2 messaging host.

1 21. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a data file.

1 22. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a text file.

1 23. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

1 24. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

1 25. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a video file.

1 26. The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving an indication that the first
2 subscriber using the first client is composing a message.

1 27. The method of claim 26, further comprising receiving the message composed by the first
2 subscriber from the first client.

1 28. The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

1 29. An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first
2 subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber
3 to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a first client configured to:

4 connect from the first client to a communications system host;
5 send through the communications system host a request to the second client to
6 establish a direct connection to the second client;
7 when the second client accepts the request, establish a direct connection to the second
8 client that bypasses the communications system host; and
9 transfer a file over the direct connection.

1 30. An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first
2 subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber
3 to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a second client configured to:

4 connect from the second client to a communications system host;
5 receive, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to
6 establish a direct connection;
7 accept the request from the first client;
8 establish a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications
9 system host; and
10 receive a file over the direct connection.

1 31. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from
2 a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client
3 associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions
4 for:

5 connecting from the first client to a communications system host;
6 sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to
7 establish a direct connection to the second client;
8 when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the
9 second client that bypasses the communications system host; and
10 transferring a file over the direct connection.

1 32. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

1 33. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client
2 device.

1 34. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host
2 device.

1 35. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a propagated
2 signal.

1 36. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from
2 a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client
3 associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions
4 for:

5 connecting from the second client to a communications system host;
6 receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to
7 establish a direct connection;
8 accepting the request from the first client;
9 establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications
10 system host; and
11 receiving a file over the direct connection.

1 37. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

1 38. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client
2 device.

1 39. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host
2 device.

1 40. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium is a propagated signal.

1 41. A method of communicating between a first client associated with a first subscriber to a
2 communications system and a second client associated with a second subscriber to the
3 communications system, the method comprising:

4 connecting from the second client to a communications system host;
5 establishing a direct connection to the client that bypasses the communications
6 system host;

7 receiving an indication that the first subscriber using the first client is composing a
8 message; and
9 receiving the message composed by the first subscriber from the first client.

1 42. The method of claim 41, wherein the indication comprises a text message.

1 43. The method of claim 41, wherein the indication comprises an icon.

1 44. The method of claim 41, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant
2 messaging host.

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